

Among the oldest systems of medicine, Ayurveda has been the pride of Indian medicine for centuries. Yet, its treatment is not free from side effects and can lead to minor or major problems. Ayurvedic practitioner Dr Prashanth Acharya discusses the fall in quality of medicines.

Ayurveda too can have adverse side-effects

What are the advantages of Ayurveda?

The advantages of Ayurveda are innumerable. Basically, Ayurveda concentrates on maintaining the health of the healthy and curing the diseases of the sick. No other system of medicine in the world concentrates on preventive aspects like Ayurveda does. For instance, Panchakarma - the five world detoxification processes of Ayurveda.

Unlike any other system of medicine, Ayurveda suggests a way of life. It tells you the length of tooth brush you must use or the colour and size of umbrella you can carry during rains.

How are diagnosis made in Ayurveda?

It's based on 'dosha' theory. It deals with the equilibrium of the body, mind and soul and not on mere signs, symptoms or causative factors alone. The medicines in Ayurveda are prepared after the purification of herbs using a specified process. Medications are herbal, herbo-mineral or mineral, which is natural and has minimal side-effects.

Can Ayurveda treat all diseases?

Yes. Ayurveda can treat all diseases. It's based on the equilibrium of doshas and hence naming the disease is not all that important. Presently, Ayurvedic experts restrain from surgical treatments and emergencies as the

drugs of anaesthesia is either extinct or not identified yet.

But it cannot be compared with allopathic medicine, as the principles and concepts on which both work are different. Just like you can never compare an apple with mango.

Has the quality of medicines changed?

Yes. The quality of the herbs have reduced, not just because of change in environment, but also due to improper guidelines for cultivation. Earlier it used to be collected in wild, and every herb had a specific time and season for collection. But now-a-days none of these are followed. Hence the quality is certainly compromised.

Ayurveda has no side effects? Is this true?

No, it's not true. Any medicine, Ayurveda included, is given in exact dosage, time and adjuvant. This is referred to as anupana in Sanskrit. If this is done perfectly in any disease, it does not cause side effects. Even poison given in exact dose, time and application after purification process will work as nectar in any disease. At the same time, even nectar given in a wrong dose to a wrong patient at the wrong time might act as poison. In other words, anything that has effects is likely to have side effects.

(As told to Pushpa Narayan)